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ABSTRACT

Academic advising is one of the primary vehicles for communicating information regarding course selection and degree attainment. Advising may also contribute to a student's overall success or failure at college (Hardee, 1970; Kramer & Gardner, 1977; O'Banion, 1971) and is critical to student retention (Habley, 1981). Advising, as a developmental process, assists students in: (1) achieving personal identity; (2) developing a moral or ethical system; (3) searching for new ways to view reality; (4) sorting out familial relationships; and (5) developing skills to cope with new life situations. Given its potential influence on students, understanding those advising characteristics that positively influence students is important to colleges. One characteristic which may influence advising relationships is self-disclosure. The degree to which advising participants self-disclose to one another may have implications for how well students succeed in academic endeavors. This literature review examines advising as a social exchange process and lists those variables which may increase self-disclosure in advising. Potential advantages of examining self-disclosure are detailed within a developmental framework. (Author)

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ADVISORS AND ADVISEES: DEVELOPING RESPONSIBLE
ADVISING RELATIONSHIPS. AN EXAMINATION
OF SELF-DISCLOSURE WITHIN ADVISING 1

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ABSTRACT

Academic advising is one of the primary vehicles for communicating information regarding course selection and degree attainment. Advising may also contribute to a student's overall success or failure at college (Hardee, 1970; Kramer & Gardner, 1977; O'Banion, 1971) and is critical to student retention (Habley, 1981). Advising, as a developmental process, assists students in (a) achieving personal identity; (b) developing a moral or ethical system; (c) searching for new ways to view reality; (d) sorting out familial relationships; and (e) developing skills to cope with new life situations. Given its potential influence on students, understanding those advising characteristics that positively influence students is important to colleges. One characteristic which may influence advising relationships is self-disclosure. The degree to which advising participants self-disclose to one another may have implications for how well students succeed in academic endeavors. This paper examines advising as a social exchange process and lists those variables which may increase self-disclosure in advising. Potential advantages of examining self-disclosure are detailed within a developmental framework.

**Advisors and Advisees: Developing Responsible Advising
Relationships. An Examination of Self-disclosure within Advising.**

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As early as 1841 when President Rutherford B. Hayes outlined new guidelines for advisor selection in a letter to his mother, colleges and universities have tried to identify and understand the tasks and roles of academic advising. President Hayes stipulated that each student would choose a faculty person who would serve as advisor and friend in all matters and would act as a medium of communication between the student and the faculty member. Almost a hundred and fifty years later, educators continued developing the faculty activity known as academic advising.

Today, academic advising holds special importance on college campuses. This role seems to direct institutions to formulate advising tasks and challenges faculty and staff to carry them out expeditiously. Advising may be seen as providing both academic and personal support to students. The tie of that student support and the overall mission of a college varies according to expressed needs, resources, and time commitments. Collectively, student support and college goals give advising its unique importance to a university.

Given advising's potential influence on students, identifying and understanding advisor characteristics that positively impact students is important for higher education. Recognizing advisor characteristics that

encourage and promote student growth sets a model that other faculty members may emulate. Of those characteristics that may have value for practice, one is self-disclosure.

Understanding self-disclosure in different settings like counseling has proven useful in determining a student's tendency to self-disclose (Merluzzi, Banikiotes, & Missbach, 1978). Self-disclosure research has been helpful also in understanding why persons are resistant to change. Contained within personal disclosures in counseling is material vital to learning about one's well-being and inner feelings. Self-disclosure, in this context, serves as a learning tool for increasing professional understanding of a person.

Self-disclosure is believed to be situation and person specific. Certain kinds of disclosure may be reserved for selected persons or special social situations. Understanding the variety of personological and environmental characteristics that influence a person's disclosure seems worthy of systematic investigation.

Investigations of self-disclosure within academic advising relationships have been minimally reported in the literature. Which advisor characteristics facilitate or inhibit advisee self-disclosure is based on speculation. How a person alters his/her self-disclosure patterns to accommodate the situational demands of advising relationships might influence intellectual functioning or communicative abilities. These factors might have important implications for effective interpersonal functioning (Chelune, 1981) in advising and other interpersonal relationships. It is important then, to identify clearly those factors that contribute to self-disclosure in selected advising interactions.

This paper examines potential patterns of self-disclosure in advising. Also, this paper discusses academic advising as a social exchange process and examines the variables which may influence advising self-disclosure. Potential implications of examining self-disclosure in advising will be outlined.

Academic Advising Definitions

Academic advising may be described as a dialogue between a faculty member and a student in which both experience mutual learning (American College Testing Program, 1977). The faculty member holds special knowledge of the institution and its goals; he/she perceives students' needs and matches those needs with available resources.

On many campuses, academic advising is viewed as a teaching function, although other campus staff persons; i.e., counselors, student affairs educators, or administrators have performed advising activities (Borland, 1971; Fordyce, O'Banion, & Goodwin, 1971). While there is variation in personnel and designated activities, there are certain tasks known to be common to most forms of advising.

Advisors assist students in: (1) periodic evaluation of their progress; (2) initial exploration of long-range occupational and professional plans; (3) designing programs consonant with their interests and competencies; (4) coordinating learning experiences; and (5) integration of various kinds of available resources (Hardee, 1970).

Advising Levels

Advising occurs at two levels (Kramer & Gardner, 1977). At the first level, A, students come to an advisor in need of technical assistance (e.g., how to drop a course, how to check requirements for graduation, or how to pre-enroll in classes). At the second level, B, students come to an advisor experiencing difficulty in understanding, interpreting, and differentiating roles of youth, student, and adult. At level B an advisor deliberately facilitates change and help students survive the "pangs" of maturation. The needs of students at this level require more than the communication of content or specific academic information. Students require involvement which conveys an acceptance of feelings, an understanding of self within an academic environment, a definition of prior or future tasks, and a resolution of conflicts about authority.

This advising is more complex than Level A and focuses on the student's personal development. The student enters the relationship uncertain of his/her goals, abilities, and desires. He/she fluctuates among varying stages of dependency/independency relative to roles within the college setting. Students' needs require more than understanding specific course descriptions. Advising at this level should provide opportunities for students to work through the dilemmas associated with youth and encourage the development of appropriate values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for successful transition into adulthood.

Self-Disclosure

The research on self-disclosure is abundant. Much of it comes from social psychology. Definitions of self-disclosure from the literature are varied. No single definition exists for the complex phenomenon.

Self-disclosure may be described as the verbal presentation of personal information about self to other individuals (Taylor, 1979). It represents any information exchange that refers to the self; including personal states, dispositions, events in the past, and plans for the future (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979, p. 152). For a verbalization to be identified as disclosure, it must contain personal information about Person A; and he/she must verbally communicate this information directly to target Person B (Chelune, 1979, pp. 2-3).

Self-disclosure is viewed as a primary factor in the development of interpersonal intimacy (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Derlega & Chaikin, 1975; Jourard, 1971b). Several researchers argue that real self-disclosure is an important way for decreasing interpersonal distance between individuals. Self-disclosure, however, does not always lead to interpersonal intimacy, which is believed to be essential for an adult's growth and development. Derlega and Chaikin (cited in Chelune, Sultan, & Williams, 1980) noted that "...disclosure may serve a positive function, i.e., to improve a relationship, ...but (it) may also be inappropriate when it elicits withdrawal and rejection" (p.11).

In ordinary social relationships disclosure is thought to be a reciprocal phenomenon. Persons in social interactions verbally avow thoughts, feelings,

actions, and other personal expressions. The assumption is that intimate disclosure of thoughts or feelings from Person A would result in similar openness from Person B. Conversely, if A exhibits closed and distant behaviors, the result for Person B would be similarly closed behaviors.

Four variables seem to influence reciprocity of disclosure: (a) stage of relationship; (b) topic level of exchange; (c) situational factors; and (d) personality or group composition factors (Altman, 1973). Reciprocal disclosure is believed to be most critical in the early stages of a relationship where commitment is less than at later stages. Reciprocal disclosure is believed to have occurred independently of social outcomes or consequences, which may have greater importance in later stages of relationships.

Self-Disclosure within Advising

Self-disclosure is believed to be inversely related to stage of relationship and topic level of intimacy. Self-disclosure in personal or social exchanges is thought to be influenced by several characteristics of the recipient (of such disclosure), i.e., the target's race, sex, and own level of self-disclosure. Each has been shown to positively influence self-disclosure in selected interactions, including counseling relationships. Few studies were found to examine these variables within academic advising relationships on campuses. This lack of literature points to the need to examine the influence of advisor characteristics on self-disclosure in selected outcome variables within academic advising exchanges in order to more fully understand advising and its influence on college students.

Advantages of Examining Self-Disclosure

College advisors may increase the efficiency of their advising relationship if an examination of advising disclosure patterns occurs. Several benefits of examining self-disclosure may arise.

First, colleges and universities may acquire more accurate knowledge about how information is exchanged in academic advising. This new insight might have implications later for course selection, degree requirements, and other educational planning. Examining disclosure patterns may help academic administrators in assignment of advising staff, delegation of advising tasks, planning of programs, record keeping, and evaluation of on-going advising systems. A more effective match between student and advisor is a potential outcome.

Self-disclosure can serve numerous functions in social relationships which may later influence the discloser's perceptions of its appropriateness (Derlega & Grzelak, 1974). Students may perceive certain topics as inappropriate to disclose to an advisor. Few research studies have examined what topics are deemed appropriate to disclose within advising relationships.

Advisors may gain valuable knowledge concerning how students actually perceive the advising process. They may learn which topics students will openly disclose. Knowing which topics a student perceives as appropriate to discuss in advising may reveal information about how a student may respond in other academic exchanges, e.g. classroom interactions. Advisors may gain

insight which may help determine later when and how a student is having academic difficulty.

Little is known about the social rules which may govern advising relationships. Differences may exist in how persons regulate their self-disclosure in selected social exchanges.(Altman, 1973). Learning to appropriately alter self-disclosure in response to varying situations is critical to effective interpersonal functioning (Chelune, 1980).

Social rules help: a) maintain cultural values by regulating expected types of behaviors; and b) regulate intimacy level in relationships. Examining the social rules of academic advising and understanding how those rules contribute to or hinder information flow is important.

The social rules which may govern appropriate disclosure behavior for whites may differ for ethnic minorities. These variations may inhibit open self-disclosure in mixed race dyads if misunderstood. Derlega & Grzelek (1979) posited that ethnic minority, economically disadvantaged, poor, and other underrepresented social groups may tend to avoid disclosure, particularly in personal or emotional areas. If faculty advisors are cognizant of these potential differences early in advising relationships, they may be better able to accomodate diversity in advisees' learning styles or world views.

Reciprocal disclosure is theorized to have occurred independently of social outcomes or consequences (Altman, 1973). It is possible that academic advising relationships do, in fact, carry social outcomes which might influence students involvement in advising relationships. One such consequence might be attempts at ingratiation. Ingratiation refers to a type of social behavior

specifically designed to make an individual or his/her personal qualities appear more attractive to another person (Archer, 1979). Examples of this social consequence might be a student seeking to influence an advisor in order to enroll in upper-level courses, to request letters of recommendation, or to ask for special academic favors. In order to develop effective advising systems, recognizing the social outcomes which may adversely influence advising is critical to developing effective advising systems.

Many times, the academic advisor is the only close personal contact a student may have with a campus adult. In this context, the advisor's role in helping the student learn appropriate adult behaviors and achieve identity is essential. Self-disclosure may become a tool to help assess how the student is meeting his/her developmental needs. A student's reticence to self-disclose in topical areas, for example, may be symptomatic of unfulfilled developmental needs. Advisors may obtain new information which they may use to may help students plan academic experiences to successfully meet their developmental needs.

Summary

This paper has sought to describe the self-disclosure phenomenon within academic advising exchanges. Self-disclosure may be defined as the verbal presentation of information about self to another person. Little is known about how students self-disclose in advising relationships. Advising as a social

exchange process is a new phenomenon, but seeing advising in this context has advantages for advisors. These advantages are summarized below:

- 1) Permits a more effective "match" between student and advisor.
- 2) Permits greater insight into the social outcomes or consequences which may accompany advising.
- 3) Helps advisors understand those factors which contribute to reciprocity within the advising exchange.
- 4) Helps identify social rules which may govern perceived appropriate disclosure topics.
- 5) Facilitates more accurate description and identification of advisee skills, deficits or conflict/problem areas.
- 6) Provides clues to developmental needs of advisees.

Examining advising within a social psychological framework opens the door for educators to develop improved and innovative advising systems. The long-range benefits of examining self-disclosure in advising are unknown. It is presumed that advisors will acquire new strategies for performing advising tasks. Through this examination, students can become more successful in achieving their educational objectives.

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